

In Fashion: Models meet your parents

by Sharon_Mosley

Can any idiot be a model? Well, according to a new book by Roshumba Williams, yes - with a lot of help along the way. Roshumba's book, "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Being a Model" (Penguin, 2007) is a must-read for anyone interested in a modeling career. With help from writer Anne Marie O'Connor, Williams provides a wealth of information from her years of personal experience as a top model with the Elite agency. She is most famous for being the first black model to grace the cover of Sports Illustrated.

MODEL GUIDE - 'The Complete Idiot's Guide to Being a Model' is a must-read for anyone interested in a modeling career. CNS Photo courtesy of Bill Thomas. She gives readers the scoop on everything from "catwalk talk" to "reality checks" each step of the way from the beginning when you're trying to find an agent to landing your first big commercial shoot on TV. She's been there, done all that and more.

But while there are many aspiring teens who want to model and think they may know everything, reading this book is a wake-up call. Williams tells it like it is - and so does her mother, LaVonne Joslin, who gives some solid advice to wannabe models. Here are some of Joslin's tips to parents:

- A parent can help his or her child pursue a modeling career by encouraging the child to follow her dreams, by letting her know it's OK to do so, by believing in her and by having faith in her talents and abilities. Let her go, but monitor her activities.

- Accompany her as she goes to modeling schools, searches, contests and other events, if you decide these are a good idea for her - and if the family budget permits it. I kept close tabs on all of Roshumba's activities, especially when she was first starting out.

- Be alert when you accompany your child on appointments with modeling agents, scouts or photographers. Be on the lookout for any people who seem sleazy, who want you to spend a lot of money, or who make what seem like unrealistic promises.

- If a modeling agency offers to represent your child, read the contract carefully to make sure your child is not signing anything that would tie her life up for longer than a year or two at a time.

- Google the company to see if there are any complaints about the agency, convention or search. Also, check with the local consumer protection agency and the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.com). Or check with the Federal Trade Commission (www.ftc.gov) to make sure the company or person you're signing with has a clean reputation, hasn't been involved with any rip-offs and doesn't have a lot of disgruntled customers.

- The best places to get referrals for established, legitimate modeling agencies are fashion-related companies, local advertising agencies, other models and big New York agencies such as IMG, Next, Elite and Ford.

- If someone is suggesting that you or your child pay a large sum of money - \$500 or \$1,000, say - to join the agency, to take pictures or to have their photos posted on a Web site, take heed - this is probably a scam.

Legitimate agencies work on commission and make money by booking models for modeling jobs; they don't make money from collecting large registration fees.

- It's also possible to tell if your child is not mature enough to leave home and start a career. If she cuts school, takes drugs and/or drinks, is mean or abusive to siblings, gets in trouble with the law or hangs around kids who are known troublemakers, she will only get into worse trouble if she becomes a model.

And Roshumba's advice to parents.

- "Modeling is a great career for young people in both the short and the long term because it offers many advantages," she says. "Some models make a lot of money in a short period of time; they can be exposed to other countries, people and cultures; and modeling can open the door to other careers in television, in film and behind the scenes in the fashion industry.

- "Parents can help their children succeed by encouraging them to follow their dreams, supporting their efforts and monitoring their actions so they don't get hurt or taken advantage of."

Copley News Service

10 questions parents should ask potential agents

Here are 10 questions a parent should ask the agent before signing a modeling contract for his/her child:

1. What kind of work do you think you'll be able to get my child?
2. What other models have you represented?
3. May I talk to other models you represent?
4. What fees will we be responsible for paying?
5. Who are some of the clients who have booked your models in the past?
6. How long is the term of the contract?
7. What individual will be supervising my child's career?
8. Is that person used to dealing with novice models?
9. What percentage of my child's earnings will you take as commission?

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